

National Collaborative Forum for the Early Years Care and Education Sector

(The Early Years Forum)

Minutes of meeting – Monday 6th March, 2.30 p.m.

St.Vincent's Early Childhood Development Service, Ballyfermot.

Attendance List: See Appendix 1

1. Welcome

- Bernie McNally opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees. The valuable role that the Forum has in discussing significant issues affecting the Early Years sector was acknowledged.

2. Minutes and Matters Arising

- The minutes of the previous meeting were taken as read and agreed with no amendments.

3. Update on the Affordable Childcare Scheme (ACS)

Bernie McNally updated the meeting as follows:

- It was announced at the Joint Oireachtas Committee on February 8th that the development of an I.T. system for the Affordable Childcare Scheme (ACS) will be delayed.
- The DCYA and Pobal are examining a range of alternative options to progress the project as quickly as possible.
- The ACS remains a priority. The DCYA is increasing resources within the Department to seek to ensure progress.
- The ACS Communications working group will be established shortly. Eugene Waters from Wicklow county Childcare Committee will be joining the DCYA shortly to lead on communications and consultations for the ACS project.
- The legislation is being advanced. The Joint Oireachtas Committee report on pre-legislative scrutiny has been received. It will be made available on the Department's website shortly.
- The DCYA has been assigned a senior drafter to progress the Heads of Bill.
- The Heads of Bill and General Scheme for the ACS propose giving the Minister the power to establish quality assurance procedures that would allow providers, other than those registered with Tusla, to access the ACS. This is a provision that may not be exercised. The need for such a provision will be considered in the context of the recommendations of the working group on childminding and from a separate working group examining school-age childcare

4. DCYA Priority List

- Paul Fay provided an update from the Early Years Forum Priority List. (Appendix 7)
- DCYA's meetings with ICTU, IMPACT and SIPTUI were discussed.
- The Review of the Cost of Childcare is a priority for the DCYA and work on it will begin as soon as possible.

- The meeting briefly discussed the budgetary position in Early Years. While much remains to be done it was acknowledged that the Early Years sector has benefitted from significant increases in budget in recent times. Paul Fay stated that these increases had been achieved despite many competing demands at both Department and Government level
- Denise McCormilla (NCN) noted that despite the initial concerns, the investments over the past few years have proved valuable – the expansion of ECCE has provided tangible benefits to the sector.
- Tusla’s Quality and Regulatory Framework (QRF) is still at the initial consultation stage. Their first consultations provided them with rich feedback. They will soon be bringing the QRF to external consultation.
- A number of issues with the PIP system were raised. David Burke, Pobal, believes that many of the stated issues with PIP reflect issues with the programme rules. Pobal have assigned a dedicated resource to make PIP more user-friendly.
- Teresa Heeney raised issues around the timeliness of the inspectorate’s scheduling and is uncertain that the Operations and Systems Alignment Group is functioning effectively. Tusla requested that any issues be forwarded to them for consideration.

The Minister joined the meeting at this point. She thanked the Forum for their great work and stated her eagerness to hear the reports from the sub-groups.

5. Launch of the Action Plan for School Age Childcare

- The Minister expressed her pleasure at launching the Action Plan on School Age Childcare. It sets out a practical path for School Age Childcare to develop in Ireland. Members of the Forum were provided with hard copies of the Action Plan.
- The Minister is delighted at the continuing collaboration between the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Department of Education and Skills. The Action Plan is an example of the work that both Departments can achieve through partnership. The Working Group on Standards for School Age Childcare will be established shortly. €3 million capital funding for School Age Childcare was announced. The call for applications will open in early April.

6. Interim Reports from the sub-groups

Childminding Working Group

- Bernadette Burke, Chair of the Working Group, acknowledged that the concerns raised earlier in the meeting have been raised in the context of the Working Group. The Working Group is looking to provide recommendations for an appropriate path forward for the childminding sector.
A document was distributed which contained details of the work of the group to date. (Appendix 2)

0-3 Incentivisation sub-group

- Margaret Rogers provided the update for the 0-3 Incentivisation sub-group. (Membership and ToR at appendix 3).
- Pobal and Tusla suggested that there may be a reduction in capacity for 0-3s in the last year.
- There is also evidence that 0-3 rooms have less qualified staff working with them.
- However, there is no evidence that there is a lack of places for 0-3s. There is a need to incentivise the provision of 0-3s to provide an appropriate choice for parents. It may also be helpful to have a Learner Fund dedicated to the 0-3 age cohort.

Communications sub-group

- Denise McCormilla provided the update for the Communications sub-group.
- The Membership and the Terms of Reference of the sub-group were quoted. (Membership and ToR are at appendix 4).
- It was noted that it was unfortunate that key organisations (DES, Tusla), who have a key role in the channels of communication operating effectively, have not yet attended these meeting.
- It is imperative that the DCYA take the lead role in regards to communications.
- A suggestion for a weekly bulletin to be released with all of the key information relating to the EY sector has been raised.
- A key output of the sub-group will be recommendations for a communication strategy and a communication protocol.

Irish Supports sub-group

- Suzanne Nic Géidí, provided the update for the Irish Medium Support sub-group. The membership and ToR are at appendix 5)
- A description of the layout of the Irish medium early years sector was provided.
- The group are examining the possibility of carrying out an audit of existing resources for Irish Medium services. This will be progressed in the context of the sub-group.
- The establishment of a national co-ordinator position who could lead on supporting Irish medium services in all aspects of early years was discussed. This could also be a “one stop shop” for resources through Irish.
- It was proposed that Udaras na Gaeltachta and the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, and Rural Affairs will be asked to join the sub-group.

Professionalisation Group

- Following a discussion from the last meeting of the EYF, members of the Forum agreed to establish a group to discuss ways to professionalise the Early Years sector.
- This group has met three times, have finalised their terms of reference and have expanded their original remit to discuss the development of an Early Years Council.

- Mary Moloney and Ian McKenna provided a presentation on their preliminary discussions. (The presentation is at appendix 6.) Minister Zappone found the work of this group inspiring, acknowledging the extensive work involved.
- The group feel that the establishment of the Council wouldn't have to be statutory immediately, comparable to similar groups in other sectors where the legislation was subsequent. This is a real opportunity to lead the field internationally.
- Denise McCormilla, whilst acknowledging the value of the proposals from the presentations, also felt it worthwhile to acknowledge the work that is already ongoing and in place; i.e. Siolta/Aistear etc.

Minister Zappone thanked each sub-group for the significant work they had completed in the time since the last meeting of the Forum. The work of these groups should continue and they will have a further opportunity to report at the next meeting.

The Minister asked the group to participate in an exercise which she believed could inform the Estimates 2018 process. The Minister left the meeting at this point. Bernie McNally resumed the Chair.

7. Estimates Exercise

Bernie McNally introduced an estimates exercise where the members of the Forum in break-out groups discussed options in relation to possible future investment in the sector. The groups were provided with the Department's projected costings of different investment possibilities. It was acknowledged that all of the cost options are provisional, using best available estimations, and are subject to revision. It was suggested that a budget of €100m be used.

The estimates page is at appendix 8.

- **Group 1 priorities** Increase the ACS universal subsidy to €1.50 p/hour. **€53m**
 - Raise the ACS income threshold to €52,500 **€8m**
 - Sustainability policy. **€2.5m**
 - Suite of Supports for Childminders. **€1.5m**
- €65m**

Additional Comments

- The remaining budget could be used for an extension to parental leave. It was acknowledged that this was within the remit of the Department of Social Protection and the Department of Justice and Equality.
- The DCYA should re-examine the work study test under the ACS. Currently, under existing childcare support schemes, children can qualify for full-time subsidised childcare regardless if one or both parents are not at home or study. Under ACS, if one or both parents are not in work or study, children will qualify for 15 hours of subsidised childcare (although there will be exceptions). If these children are in ECCE or primary school, they will not be subsidised for any

childcare, including after-school care during ECCE and primary school terms. They will qualify for 15 hours of childcare during non-term time. It is argued that this will not be in the best interest of all children.

Group 2

- | | |
|---|------------------|
| • Sustainability policy. | €2.5m |
| • Childminders. | €1.5m |
| • Expand ECCE to 48 weeks. | €89.9m |
| • Increase the Under 3s subsidy to €1 per hour. | €26m |
| • Childminding supports. | €1.5m |
| | €119.9m |
| | (€121.4m) |

Additional Comments

- Additional Parental Leave –(It was acknowledged that money to cover the cost of parental leave does not come from the DCYA budget)
- It was highlighted that ACS subsidy rates are based on the current wage rates in the sector and would need to be adjusted if/when wages increase.

Group 3

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| • Increase the investment in non-contact time from 2017 by 50%. | €7.75m |
| • Increase the ECCE capitation by 5% | €17.1m |
| • Increase the subsidy rate for the ACS by 5%. | €8.5m |
| • Sustainability policy. | €2.5m |
| • Childminding suite of supports. | €1.5m |
| • Raise the ACS base income threshold to €27,500. | €19m |
| • Raise the maximum income threshold to €52,500 | €8m |
| • Increase the ACS universal subsidy for under 3s to €1 per hour. | €26m |
| | €90.35m |

Group 4

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| • Increase the ACS subsidy by 10% | €17m |
| • ECCE expansion to 4 hours. | €109.14m |
| • Non-contact time. | €14.5m |
| • Increase ECCE capitation by 5%. | €17.1m |
| • Suite of supports for childminders. | €1.5m |
| | €159.24m |

Additional Comments

- The group believed that sustainability work should be ongoing. However, they questioned that it would cost €2.5m to develop a sustainability policy.

8. Any Other Business

Consultation with Solas

- In response to a query from the floor there was some discussion around the ongoing process around skills between DCYA and Solas. While this process is still at the formative stage the meeting heard some concern around the evidence base underpinning the process and who would be carrying out the work to examine a possible apprenticeship style and model.

Professionalisation Group

- In the area of professionalisation, DCYA confirmed that it remains open to further discussions around the issue.

9. Date(s) of Future Meetings.

- The next meeting of the Early Years Forum is scheduled to take place on Monday, June ¹⁹th at 2.30 p.m. Details on venue will be discussed.

Adam Gunning

18/04/2017

¹ The meeting date was subsequently changed to Monday 24th July at 2.30pm.

Appendix 1

Attendance List

Department of Children and Youth Affairs	Minister Zappone Bernie McNally Paul Fay Adam Gunning Magdalene Hayden
The National Quality Support Service	Margaret Rogers
Childcare Committees Ireland	Oonagh Fleming + Trish McLaughlin
Early Childhood Ireland	Teresa Heeney + Paula Hilliard
National Children's Network	Denise McCormilla
Barnardos	Heino Schonfeld
Childminding Ireland	Bernadette Burke
Hightscope	Siobhan Fitzpatrick
Private Early Education Providers	Regina Bushell
National Forum for Community Childcare Services	Marie Daly
PLÉ	Mary Maloney
Tusla	Fiona McDonnell
Pobal	David Burke
Gaeloideachas	Claire Spainneach
Comhar Naíonraí na Gaeltachta	Suzanne Nic Géidí
Association of Childhood Professionals	Marian Quinn
Saint Nicholas Montessori	Ian McKenna*

*Attending to provide a presentation from the Professionalisation group.

Appendix 2

Childminding Working Group Update

Find attached pdf document, titled 'PF EYF Childminding.Presentation 06.03.17'

Appendix 3

0-3 Incentivisation sub-group

Membership:

Paul Fay	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
Alan Padden	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
Helen Rouine	Tusla
Joan McGarry	Pobal
Margaret Rogers	Better Start
Milli Atanakovic	Early Childhood Ireland
Miriam O'Regan	Childminding Ireland
Ulrike Farnleitner	Irish Steiner Kindergarten Association
Siobhan Fitzpatrick	HighScope
Mary Maloney	PLÉ
Marian Quinn	Association of Childhood Professionals

Terms of Reference:

- To explore reasons for discrepancy between numbers of children attending ECEC schemes who have not attended for early years services before.
- Discuss how to ensure high quality staff are working with children aged 0-3 years as well as 3-5 year olds.
- Examine the evidence for the requirement for the higher staff ratios required for 1-3 year olds.
- Discuss which form of care and education is best for 0-3 year olds.
- Provide funding and sustainability for children.
- Provide updates to the Early Years Forum including short, medium and long term goals of the group.

Appendix 4

Communications sub-group

Membership:

Michael Keenan (Chair)	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
Alan Padden	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
Aoife Conduit	Department of Education and Skills
Karen O’Sullivan	Childcare Committees Ireland
Denise McCormilla	National Childhood Network
Sinead Lawton	Barnardos
Mike Corcoran	Tusla
Ruth Shortall	Pobal
Mary Delargy	PEEP
Ian McKenna	St. Nicholas Montessori

Terms of Reference:

For the purpose of this sub-group, “Communication” will be defined as

- (a) the language and content, and
- (b) the medium through which information is channelled within the Early Years Sector.

The sub-group will prepare proposals for consideration by the Early Years Forum in relation to:

- (a) How operational communications between the listed stakeholders and service providers can be improved:

- DCYA
- DES
- Tusla
- Pobal
- CCCs
- VCOs

- (b) How High Level Policy Communications between the sector and the following stakeholders can be improved:

- DCYA
- DES
- Tusla
- Pobal
- CCCs
- VCOs
- Other Departments, where necessary

(c) The development of an appropriate communication mechanism for parents.

(d) Whether and by what means the sector itself can contribute to an efficient and effective communications process.

(e) The development of an Early Years Communications Strategy and Protocol.

Appendix 5

Irish Supports sub-group

Membership:

Aoife Conduit	Department of Education and Skills
Adam Gunning	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
Breda Cloney	Tusla
Siobhan Keegan	Better Start
Grainne Uí Mhaolagáin	Na Naíonraí Gaelacha
Seosamh Ó Coinne	Foras na Gaeilge
Suzanne Níc Géidí	Comhar Naíonraí Na Gaeltachta Teoranta
Clare Spáinneach	Gaelscoileanna Teo

Terms of Reference:

The sub-group will prepare proposals for consideration by the Early Years Forum in relation to:

- (a) How provision of Irish medium ECEC can be supported.
- (b) How Irish medium ECEC materials and supports for the Irish medium early years sector can be improved including training, CPD, materials and other resources and services;

Appendix 6

Professionalisation Group

Find attached PDF document titled 'PF EYF Professionalisation.Presentation 06.03.17'

Appendix 7

Early Years Forum Priority List

	Issue Raised	Date	Response and Action
1	Garda Vetting (length of time taken to obtain vetting disclosures; possibility of carrying vetting disclosures from employer to employer)	Sept '16	DCYA will arrange a meeting with the Department of Justice in the first instance to discuss the rationale behind the requirements of the 2012 Act. (September 2016)
Nov '16		DCYA met with Department of Justice. Consideration was given to adopting the UK system under which a "Barring List" of persons convicted of certain offences is maintained (Persons on this list cannot be employed to work with children. The list can be accessed on-line at any stage by employers.) However, the Attorney General at the time advised that such a system would be unconstitutional in this country, as it would interfere with an individual's right to work. (November 2016 update)	
Mar '17		DCYA have met with ECI and Barnardos to assess methods of expediting the length of time it takes to process a Garda Vetting claim. Following these meetings, DCYA is considering business cases from the two organisations with a view to reducing processing time. DCYA will be keeping this matter under close review.	
2	Commercial Rates	Sept '16	Given the concerns raised, the Minister and her officials will pursue this matter further with DPER. (September 2016)
Nov '16		DCYA will write to DPER in January 2017 to pursue this issue. (November 2016)	
Mar '17		The Department have contact the Valuation Office in DPER to arrange a meeting to further pursue this issue. Any updates arising from this meeting will be passed on to the Forum.	
3	Payment for Non-Contact Time	Sept '16	€14m has been provided under Budget 2017 to support the non-contact time needed for providers to administer the programmes, plan the curriculum, communicate with parents etc. The additional funding will enable ECCE providers to be paid for an additional 7 days where no children will be attending the service and they can concentrate on the administrative workload. The additional funding will be paid on the basis of 1.4 weeks multiplied by the number of children in the service. For

			example, a service on standard capitation with 25 ECCE children will receive €2,257.50 for non-contact time (€64.50 X 25 X 1.4). An equivalent payment will be made in respect of the CCS and TEC programmes. (September 2016)
		Mar '17	DCYA is working on how this funding will be administered. The plan is to issue payment in June.
4	Improvements to pay in the sector	Sept '16	DCYA acknowledges that staff feeling valued is an important component of delivering high quality services, and remains committed to seeking additional investment over a series of budgets to improve the quality and affordability of early years care and education. The Early Years Strategy will reinforce this message. (September 2016)
		Nov '16	DCYA will seek to explore with DPER the possibility of a formal process on pay and conditions acknowledging that DCYA is not an employer but that it is a significant funder and has an interest in developing accessible, affordable and high quality services. In tandem with this, representatives of the sector may wish to work together, outside of the Forum structure, to produce proposals. (November 2016)
		Mar '17	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Professionalisation Group will provide an update on the work they've carried out since the last meeting of the EYF. 2. The Minister and officials have had constructive meetings with ICTU and individual trade unions on the matter of the sustainability of the sector, professionalisation of the early years' workforce and how both of these are linked to the quality of childcare. It was agreed that DCYA officials and the union sector would continue to engage on these issues. The Department continues to explore how this issue might be progressed with employers and employees. The Minister is committed to negotiating the best possible Budget for 2018 to enable some improvements to quality in the sector.
5	Continued investment in training to support professionalisation of sector	Sept '16	Whilst DCYA must maintain a focus on the small number of staff still to complete Level 5, and ensuring sufficient supply of Level 6 Room Leaders, DCYA is also considering how staff can be supported to upskill to Level 7 and 8, and will work with the Department of Education and Skills in relation to this. The Early Years Strategy will contain a focus on this issue. (September 2016)

		Nov '16	DCYA will continue to support training of the sector through the Learner Fund. The EY Strategy is being advanced.(November 2016)
		Mar '17	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In recognition of the sector's commitment to further professionalisation, the DCYA paid a Bursary of €750 to EY practitioners who have completed a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 7, Level 8, or Level 9 qualification on the National Framework of Qualifications since the inception of the Learner Fund (2013). This was paid out to approx. 850 EY practitioners. 2. The Learner Fund will open later in the year. The format is under discussion.
6	Increased affordability for parents, both universally and on a targeted basis.	Sept '16	The Single Affordable Childcare Programme which is currently being developed will replace the existing targeted schemes with a single, streamlined scheme which will be more user-friendly for both parents and providers. The new scheme will enhance affordability, providing both universal and targeted subsidies for parents towards their childcare costs. Funding provided in 2017 marks a first step. The scheme will provide an infrastructure from which further investment can be administered in the coming years. (September 2016)
		Nov '16	The Affordable Childcare Scheme is being advanced and a project plan for delivery is being agreed. (November 2016)
		Mar '17	Update provided by Minister during meeting. (REQUIRES AN UPDATE)
7	Improved communication with the sector by DCYA, Tusla etc.	Sept '16	It is envisaged that the Early Years Forum will facilitate better communications. This matter will be discussed at the next meeting with a view to establishing a sub-group to make specific recommendations within three months for implementation in 2017. (September 2016)
		Nov '16	A sub-group of the Forum will be established to prepare and submit proposals to the Forum on how communications with the early years sector should be managed. (November 2016)

		Mar '17	Denise McCormilla will provide an update from the Communications sub-group. (REQUIRES AN UPDATE)
8	Ensure that all inspection and information services, and publications, are available through the medium of Irish	Sept '16	This matter will be discussed at the next Forum meeting with a view to establishing a sub-group to make specific recommendations as to how the issue can be addressed. (September 2016)
		Nov '16	A sub-group of the Forum will be established to prepare and submit proposals to the Forum on how early years services operating through the medium of Irish can be supported. (November 2016)
		Mar '17	Suzanne Nic Geidi will provide an update from the Irish Supports sub-group. (REQUIRES AN UPDATE)
9	Publication of the Early Years Strategy	Sep '16	The Early Years Strategy will be finalised by the end of the year. EYF members to be invited to Open Policy Debate and date for same will be provided as soon as possible. (September 2016)
		Nov '16	DCYA indicated that, due to competing priorities and finite resources, the Strategy is not now expected to be finalised by the end of the year. Members of the EYF have been invited to the Open Policy Debate which is being held on 7 th December. This will represent a significant milestone in the development of the Strategy (November 2016)
		Mar '17	Grace Bolton has now been re-assigned to work full time on the strategy. She will liaise with the EYF with regard to the chapter on EY care and education as her work progresses. She is currently considering the feedback from the Open Policy Debate from before Christmas. She is also working with senior policy makers in the DCYA and other departments re potential actions. It is hoped to bring the Strategy to Government before the summer.
10	Value for money review of the State's funding of the early years sector	Sept '16	DCYA will discuss a VFM Review with the Research and Evaluation unit of the DCYA and will report to the Forum at the next meeting. (September 2016)
		Nov '16	The evaluation post in Research and Evaluation unit has recently been filled, and the feasibility of a VFM review of the State's funding of the early years sector will be discussed with that unit within the

			next few weeks. (November 2016)
		Mar '17	DCYA believes that finite resources are best used in 2017 to advance the Independent Review of the Cost of Childcare.
11	Amendment of the QQI Level 5 requirements to facilitate childminders undertaking the work experience component.	Sept '16	The Working Group on Childminders recently established by the DCYA has been asked to consider this issue and make recommendations. The Group is due to submit a report to the Department by May 2017. (September 2016)
		Mar '17	Bernadette Burke will provide an update from the Childminding Working Group. Details of this update will be provided with the minutes. (REQUIRES AN UPDATE)
12	Introduction of registration and regulation of all childminders	Sept '16	The Working Group on Childminders recently established by the DCYA has been asked to make recommendations to the Department on this issue. The Group is due to submit a report to the Department by May 2017. (September 2016)
		Mar '17	Bernadette Burke will provide an update from the Childminding Working Group. Details of this update will be provided with the minutes. (REQUIRES AN UPDATE)
13	Increase the ECCE programme capitation payment	Sept '16	DCYA remains committed to seeking additional investment over a series of budgets to improve access to high quality and affordable early years care and education. The Early Years Strategy will reinforce this message. (September 2016)
		Nov '16	Additional investment in the early years sector needs to be addressed through the Estimates and Budget process. (November 2016)
		Mar '17	A discussion on the Estimates Process will feature during the meeting. (REQUIRES AN UPDATE)
14	Incentivise providers to provide care for 0-3 year olds	Sept '16	The Single Affordable Childcare Scheme will include a universal subsidy for children between the ages of 6 months and 36 months (or until the child qualifies for the ECCE programme if later) who are receiving childcare in a Tusla-registered childcare service. The Scheme will reflect the real cost of provision and will involve different maximum subsidy rates reflecting the additional costs of caring for younger children (higher ratios). DCYA will monitor supply and demand issues for 0-3 services. (September 2016)

		Nov '16	A sub-group of the Forum will be established to prepare and submit proposals to the Forum on how early years services can be encouraged to provide / continue to provide care for children outside of the ECCE cohort. (November 2016)
		Mar '17	Margaret Rogers will provide an update from the incentivisation of 0-3 year olds sub-group. Details of this update will be provided with the minutes. (REQUIRES AN UPDATE)
15	Implement National Standards and the Early Years Quality Frameworks	Sept '16	When the Quality and Regulatory Framework (which will be used by Tusla to inform its inspections) is finalised, the development of National Quality Standards for pre-school services will be considered. Development of National Quality Standards for School Age Services will commence immediately. (September 2016)
		Nov '16	The Inter-Departmental Working Group's Report on School Age Childcare is expected to be finalised shortly. When the Report has been submitted to and approved by both Ministers, a Working Group to develop quality standards for school age childcare will be established. (November 2016)
		Mar '17	Tusla will soon consult with the wider EY workforce in relation to the draft Quality and Regulatory Framework A Working Group to develop Standards for School Age Childcare will be established this month following the launch of the School Age Childcare Action Plan today.
16	Carry out a quality audit of early years education-focused inspections	Sept '16	A review of the Quality Framework and Inspection Model for the education-focused inspections was built in to the implementation phase which covers the first year following approval by the Ministers for Children and Youth Affairs and Education and Skills. This period will conclude in April 2017. A number of quality assurance activities have been planned during this phase, including moderation of inspection reports, implementation of the framework in diverse early years settings and continuing consultation with stakeholders and partner organisations. The current model cannot be revised until the end of this first year of implementation. Outcomes of these quality assurance activities will not therefore impact on inspection activity until September 2017. (September 2016)
		Mar '17	The Department is meeting with the Chief State's Solicitors Office on the 8 th March to discuss the tender for the Quality Audit RFT . It is expected that it will issue very soon after this date.

		Apr '17	The Quality Audit RFT is now listed on the eTenders website. The deadline for responses is May 29 th .
17	Establish a professional register of Early Years Educators	Sept '16	Unfortunately, the establishment of a professional regulator is a major task requiring legislation and resources. Hence, this may need to await attention in 2018 business plans. (September 2016)
		Mar '17	The Professionalisation group will provide an update to the Forum. (REQUIRES AN UPDATE)
18	Support Irish-medium childcare services outside of Gaeltacht areas	Sept '16	This matter will be discussed at the next Forum meeting with a view to establishing a sub-group to make specific recommendations as to how the issue can be addressed. (September 2016)
		Nov '16	A sub-group of the Forum will be established to prepare and submit proposals to the Forum on how early years services operating through the medium of Irish can be supported. (November 2016)
		Mar '17	Suzanne Nic Geidi will provide an update from the Irish Supports sub-group. Details of this update will be included with the minutes. (REQUIRES AN UPDATE)
19	Streamline the inspection processes	Sept '16	The inspection processes will be kept under review by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Department of Education and Skills through the Operations and Systems Alignment Group, with a view to further streamlining the systems. (September 2016)
		Mar '17	The Operations and Systems Alignment Group continue to meet regularly where they review issues relating to the inspection regimes.
20	Ensure the PIP system is fit-for-purpose	Sept '16	A Programmes, Policy and Operational Planning Group, comprising representatives from DCYA, Pobal and Childcare Committees Ireland, meets regularly to discuss issues raised relating to the operation of PIP. Any technical issues that arise are referred to the PIP Project Management Team for resolution. The inclusion of the Single Affordable Childcare Scheme within the PIP system will be subject to significant planning and design to ensure that it is fit-for-purpose. (September 2016)
		Mar '17	Work continues by DCYA and Pobal to make PIP more user friendly. The Minister will provide an update on the Affordable Childcare Scheme at the meeting. (REQUIRES AN UPDATE)

21	Introduce quality assessment, and make quality a contractual requirement, linked to funding	Sept '16	The Department of Children and Youth Affairs intends to enter into contract before the end of the year with an external provider for the design of an Audit Tool that can be used to measure the quality of early years provision. Following the implementation of the Audit Tool, consideration will be given to the aligning funding with quality. Update on progress in relation to the tender process will be provided at next EYF meeting. (September 2016)
		Nov '16	The request for tender for the design of the Audit Tool is expected to issue before the end of the year. (November 2016)
		Apr '17	The Quality Audit RFT is now listed on the eTenders website. The deadline for responses is May 29 th .
22	Additional Funding for State Inspectorate (Tusla)	Sept '16	Additional funding of €1.1m was provided for Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate in 2016 and a further €0.68m is being provided in 2017 to enhance and extend the Inspectorate. This will fund additional inspectors and staff for the Registration Office. (September 2016)
		Mar '17	The Department provided additional funding of €0.68m for Tusla's EY Inspectorate in Budget 2017.
23	Development of a Workforce Plan for the Early Years Sector *	Nov '16	The development of a Workforce Plan for the Early Years Sector is a priority for both the DCYA and the Department of Education and Skills and will be progressed asap. (November 2016)
		Mar '17	The DCYA and DES met with Solas in February to discuss a workforce plan. It is hoped that one can be commissioned this year. A further update will be provided at the next meeting.

Appendix 7

Estimates Exercise

Estimate Exercise – Monday, 6th March 2017.

Since the establishment of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in 2011, the increase in Budget allocation for Early Years Care and Education has been:

EY Budget	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
	€250m	€260m	€260m	€260m	€345m	€466.5m
Increase	€0m	€10m	€0m	€0m	€85m	€121.5

All increases have been approximated

Question:- What options would you recommend if €50m, €80m, €100m or €120m was negotiated for EY in Budget 2018?

Estimate options

N.B. All of the following cost options are <u>provisional, using best available estimations, and subject to revision</u> . These options are also additional to the level of funding that is already provided.	
Increase the Affordable Childcare Scheme Universal Subsidy for Under 3s to €1 per hour (from 50cents, max €40 per week)	€26m per year
Increasing the Affordable Childcare Scheme Universal Subsidy for Under 3s to €1.50 per hour (max €60 per week)	€53m per year
Raising the Affordable Childcare Scheme maximum income threshold (net) from €47,500 to €52,500	€8m per year
Raising the Affordable Childcare Scheme maximum income threshold (net) from €47,500 to €57,500	€16m per year
Raising the Affordable Childcare Scheme base income threshold (level at which maximum subsidy rates are paid) from €22,700 to €27,500	€19m per year

N.B. All of the following cost estimates are provisional and subject to revision.	
Increasing subsidy rates for the Affordable Childcare Scheme by 10% (so that maximum rates range from €4.14 to €5.62)	€17m per year
Increasing subsidy rates for the Affordable Childcare Scheme by 20% (so that maximum rates range from €4.51 to €6.13):	€35m per year
ECCE expansion from 38 to 48 weeks	€89.916m (full year cost)
ECCE expansion from 3 hours daily to 4 hours @38 weeks	€109.14m (full year cost)
ECCE expansion to both 48 weeks and 4 hours daily	€233.8m (full year cost)
Double the investment in non-contact time announced for 2017	€14.5m
Increase ECCE capitation- 5%	€17.1m (Full year cost)
Increase ECCE capitation- 10%	€34.2m (Full year cost)
Increase ECCE capitation- 15%	€51.3m (Full year cost)
As part of the Review of the Cost of the Provision of Childcare, design parameters to inform the development of a Sustainability Policy.	€2.5m (Estimated)
Suite of Supports in move towards Regulation of Childminders (First Aid, Child Protection)	€1.5m (Estimated)